



BACKGROUND

To embrace and uphold our tradition as a nation of immigrants.

The Latino, Asian, and Immigrant Vote: 2004

While there have been some disputes between various exit-pollsters and pundits about what happened with the Latino, Asian, and immigrant vote in 2004, one thing is clear: Latino, Asian and immigrant turnout and participation was unprecedented. Many of the organizations that work closely or loosely with the National Immigration Forum and the New American Opportunity Campaign sponsored voter registration, voter education, and voter mobilization drives, and all available evidence indicates that their goal of increased registration and participation were achieved. The number of first-time voters was generally considered to have been very large in this election as well.

The evidence on who these voters voted for is cloudier. Exit polls on Election Day commissioned by the Associated Press and the television networks tell part of the story, but have been somewhat discredited (partly because, at least at midday, they failed to predict the presidential outcome correctly). Other exit polls conducted by advocacy organizations paint slightly different pictures, both from the “official” exit polls and from each other. Additional exit polls were conducted by other media and polling outfits, further muddying the picture. However, taken together, they give an indication of how immigrant, Asian, and Latino voters actually voted in 2004.

The following analysis is based on a synthesis of information from a number of media, polling, and colleague advocacy organizations.

The Polls

- NEP:** National Election Pool, administered by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International (on behalf of the Associated Press, ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox News, and NBC); N=13,110 respondents leaving polling places at 250 precincts nationwide on Election Day and 500 telephone interviews with early and absentee voters.
- LA Times:** Los Angeles Times, administered by Schlesinger Associates and Davis Research; N=5,154 voters (including 3,357 California voters) at 136 polling places across the nation on Election Day.
- NY Times:** Analyzed NEP data using a slightly different methodology to identify Latino voters in order to maintain the ability to compare 2004 results to results compiled by NEP’s predecessors in national network exit polling.
- WCVI:** William C. Velasquez Institute, research arm of the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project; N=1,179 Latino respondents in 56 precincts in the 14 states that include 90% of the Latino population of the United States (AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, IL, MA, MI, NJ, NM, NV, NY, PA, and TX).
- AALDEF:** Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund; N=11,000 Asian voters interviewed on Election Day in 82 poll sites in 20 cities in eight states (IL, MA, MI, NY, NJ, PA, RI, and VA).

Asian Voters

AALDEF's data indicate that turnout was at a record level, that Senator Kerry beat President Bush by a 74% to 24% margin (2% voted for others), and that 38% of Asian voters were voting for the first time.

Table 1: Asian Voters in Four Exit Polls, 2004

Poll	% of Total Vote	Bush/Cheney	Kerry/Edward	Other
NEP	2	44	56	*
LA Times	3	34	64	N/A
NY Times	2	41	58	*
AALDEF	N/A	24	74	2

Both the LA Times and NY Times polls showed slightly higher support for Sen. Kerry in 2004 than for Vice President Gore in 2000 among Asian voters, but by only 2% in each poll. The LA Times poll showed Asian voters had increased their percentage of the overall vote by 1%, from 2% up to 3%.

AALDEF and others report significant attempts by campaigns and poll monitors to intimidate, confuse, or otherwise block Asian voters from voting on Election Day.

For more on AALDEF's analysis, visit: <http://www.aaldef.org/news.html#pollresults>

Latino Voters

Arguably, with greater numbers comes greater attention, and Latino voters received a great deal of attention in the 2004 election cycle. All indications are that turnout grew substantially from the estimated 5.9 million Hispanic votes cast in 2000. In 2004, most estimates have the Latino vote growing above 7 million, with some estimates running as high as (a somewhat implausible) 9-10 million.

Going into the campaign, chief White House political strategist Karl Rove stated he wanted to increase the President's share of the Hispanic electorate from 35% in 2000 to at least 40% in 2004. Depending on which exit polls you believe, he achieved his goal.

Table 2: Latino Voters in Four Exit Polls, 2004

Poll	% of Total Vote	Bush/Cheney	Kerry Edwards	Other
NEP	8	44	53	2
LA Times	5	45	54	N/A
NY Times	6	43	56	*
WCVI	N/A	31	68	N/A

There is a significant discrepancy between the WCVI exit poll and the others. WCVI argues, fairly persuasively, that their sample is more accurate. The WCVI sample has more urban Latino voters who are more likely to be Democrats. They argue that they chose a sampling method that would geographically replicate the true geographical

distribution of Latino voters. The other exit polls, trying to replicate the geographical distribution of all voters, tended to include more suburban and rural voters.

For a detailed discussion of the Latino vote by the National Council of La Raza, “How Did Latino Voters Really Vote in 2004?” visit:

<http://www.nclr.org/content/publications/detail/28218>

In Washington, as we know, perception is as important as reality, if not more so. The chattering classes, in analyzing the election outcome, have put a significant spotlight on the Latino vote, and President Bush’s success in increasing his appeal among Latinos.

“The fact that the Hispanic electorate continues to be volatile makes it one of the most important swing votes in America,” said Miami pollster Sergio Bendixen, who has conducted surveys for Democrats. (Los Angeles Times, Nov. 4, 2004)

“It’s clear that the Bush campaign worked hard to connect with the Hispanic community and it paid off,” said Janet Murguia, executive director of the National Council of La Raza, a nonpartisan Hispanic advocacy group. (New York Newsday, Nov. 4, 2004)

“In the 2004 election, the Hispanic vote really *did* matter—particularly in the race for the White House. An estimated 9 million Hispanics cast ballots—more than ever before. According to exit polls, President Bush won as much as 44 percent of the Hispanic vote—improving on the 35 percent he received in 2000 and breezing past the stated goal of White House senior adviser Karl Rove, who had said he’d be happy with 40 percent.” (Dallas Morning News Editorial, Nov. 9, 2004)

Ultimately, it may not matter so much which exit poll you believe as it does which exit polls the White House and Congress believe. Consider this development which, barely a week after the election, began to set the course for the coming immigration debate:

The president met privately in the Oval Office with Sen. John McCain to discuss jump-starting a stalled White House initiative that would grant legal status to millions of immigrants who broke the law to enter the United States. The Arizona Republican is one of the Senate’s most outspoken supporters of expanding guest-worker programs and has introduced his own bill to offer a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants. “We are formulating plans for the legislative agenda for next year,” said White House political strategist Karl Rove. “And immigration will be on that agenda.” He added: “The president had a meeting this morning to discuss with a significant member of the Senate the prospect of immigration reform. And he’s going to make it an important item.” (Washington Times, Nov. 10, 2004)

Immigrant Voters

None of the major exit polling operations indicate what happened with immigrant voters because they do not typically ask in what country the respondent was born. This is a glaring hole in the data that we should encourage media and public opinion leaders to address.

However, there is some anecdotal data that has circulated. For example, polling by Sergio Bendixen of Bendixen and Associates in four states indicated that Spanish-dominant Latinos (presumably immigrants more recently arrived) trended more towards Bush than all Latinos. Other media outlets reported similar findings, that more recently-arrived immigrants tended to vote more Republican than other Latinos. However, broad-based evidence is just not available.

Efforts by grassroots and regional organizations to register and turnout new immigrant voters seemed to be successful, both in the numbers they reached and in the press coverage their efforts garnered. The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, for example, registered 27,000 new voters in the Chicago area. A similar effort spearheaded by the New York Immigration Coalition also generated a good deal of newsprint attention.

Finally, reports of efforts to intimidate voters or otherwise prevent them from voting were widespread, targeting ethnic, minority, and immigrant voters in particular. While this is not new, it is nonetheless troubling and something for our organizations to track closely and publicize.

Elected Officials

The most notable gains were in the Senate, where former *Pedro Pan* Cuban refugee Mel Martinez was elected as a Republican from the State of Florida. He will join Democrats Ken Salazar, a fifth-generation Mexican-American elected to the Senate from Colorado, and Barak Obama, the U.S.-born son of a Kenyan who studied in the United States. Senator Salazar's brother, John Salazar (D-CO), will be the only Latino added to the U.S. House of Representatives in the 109th Congress. Rep. Bobby Jindal (R-LA), the first Indian-American to win election to Congress in four decades, will represent a district in New Orleans. He was elected President of the Republican freshman class, a leadership position.

For a complete discussion of Latino elected officials at the federal, state, and local level, see, *Latinos In Congress And State Houses After Election 2004: A State-By-State Summary*, which can be obtained from the Web site of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials at:

[http://www.naleo.org/PRA/Post Election Profile 2004.pdf](http://www.naleo.org/PRA/Post_Election_Profile_2004.pdf).

Prepared by the National Immigration Forum
January 26, 2005